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Focus on Young Film Makers: Student Film Making--Types and Techniques.

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Brief descriptions of 10 styles of student film making include references to specific films employing the techniques. The styles of film making listed are animation, pixillation animation, collage, draw-on, documentary, bio-documentary, story line, impressionistic, commercials, and the school film. Directions for submitting films to the Young Film Makers Exchange are given, and films for rental are listed. (LH)

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How to read this issue

(Forsythias in autumn? Read on . . .) "If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." Words of Keats to John Taylor in 1818. Which of your students would not attest that poetry study is sledging rocks for a gram of precious metal that might, might be buried inside? Which of them would not maintain that the study of poetry is basically academic, the very opposite of "natural"? Last month we suggested tactics for getting Shakespeare out of the ground and up on his feet. This issue offers three relatively uptapped poetic forms which just might put all that precious metal nearer the surface. Haiku, typographical poetry and concretism offers ways of getting poetry out of the ground and, in this case, up on the wall. **Poems on the Wall** by David Burmester (pg. 22) utilizes one very ancient poetic form (haiku) and two relatively modern forms (typographical and concrete poetry) and connects them with the overhead projector to provide an exciting and involving way of teaching poetry. Haiku and typographical poetry are relatively well known. Concrete poetry, however, is new by contrast; we have attempted to give you in this issue a feel for its possibilities. Adorning this month's cover is an example of concrete poetry by Mary Ellen Solt entitled "Forsythia." The poet comments on her work in "An Anthology of Concrete Poetry" (Something Else Press, 1967): "The design of 'Forsythia' is made from the letters of the name of the flowering shrub and their equivalents in the Morse code. The text is part of the poem." Your first reaction probably is—That's a poem? It's certainly not the usual sort of poem. Any meaningful definition of poetry would, however, have to count it in. It's not prose; it's not a painting; but it is verbal. What is unique about it is the intimate connection between it and the page it's printed on; that is its form and meaning. It is concrete, visual as well as conceptual, in much the same way as the experiments of Cummings are. And therein lies the special appeal of typographical and concrete poetry for today's kids. They exploit their characteristic visual propensity and have a better chance, thereby, than the old verbal venerables. The overhead is particularly crucial in this context, for it permits a group of students an almost tactile experience. The private fidgeting that usually transpires between a student and a bleeding purple ditto sheet is replaced by a public image in which all can participate simultaneously. As Mr. Burmester suggests, this treatment of poetry produces results which "are sometimes pleasing, sometimes stimulating and always unpredictable." What more could you ask from poetry study?

35 We would have been tempted to print **Visuals and Verse** by Irving Weiss twice if space had permitted, because to read it once would be an injustice. It is one of those essays which when cursorily read appear needlessly complex, but when delved more patiently yield lucid and important insights. There is a scarcity of depth studies in mass media in education journals—especially since the unfortunate demise of the NCTE monthly, "Studies in the Mass Media"—a scarcity complemented by a tremendous need. Scarcer yet are articles which emerge from the fog of speculation and suggest methods for probing the media monster. "Visuals and Verse" is both —a rationale and a means.

46 **Cockroach in the Curriculum** by Winfield Carlough describes a whimsical book of neo-fables written by a poet whose essence has transmigrated into a cockroach ("gods i am pent in a cockroach / i with the soul of a dante / am mate and companion of fleas"). His musings on his own fate and his pointed commentary on his fellow creatures can lighten your students' curriculum overload in more ways than one.

BRIEFCASE FOR PAPERBACKS
Frank Ross 6
NEWS 14
MEDIABAG 16
1984 PREVISITED
William Strong 30
FOCUS ON YOUNG FILM MAKERS
Hank Putsch 50
MULTI-MEDIA
Jacob Needle 52
UNDERGROUND PAPERBACKS
Robert Lambert 53
IMAGINATIVE IDEAS 55
SHORT FILMS
William Sloan 57
RECORDS AND TAPES
Kirby Judd 59
SCHOOL PAPERBACKS ... 62

FOCUS ON YOUNG FILM MAKERS

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Student film making: Types and techniques

BY HENRY E. PUTSCH In response to the needs of those who are thinking about the possibility of making films with your students—or just getting started—here are brief descriptions of ten styles of student film making which suggest the many possibilities. Lest the categories be misleading, it should be noted that most young film makers employ more than one of the following techniques. Following each mode is a "film reference" which offers an excellent model of the technique. Most film makers and teachers find it very helpful to study an exemplary film. Each film reference suggested is one of the best.

ANIMATION Troll dolls, panda bears, shoes, and many other objects are animated to tell a story. Since convincing performances by live actors are not required, this technique is often the most satisfying. Another advantage is that variables (light changes, focusing, and weather conditions) can be held to a minimum. The process requires a camera capable of single-frame exposure, a reliable film tripod, and patience. With a little experimentation, kids quickly learn how many frames to shoot and how to manipulate the object to achieve the effect desired on film.

Film reference: "Newton Mini-Films," Yellow Ball Workshop, 62 Tarbell Street, Lexington, Massachusetts.

PIXILLATION ANIMATION *Developed* by Norman McLaren of the National Film Board of Canada, this technique is similar to straight animation. It employs humans, however, and "animates" them to move like puppets or objects in a non-human way. The effect is unexpected, often comic, and relatively simple to achieve. *The Ace,* listed on the Exchange, was made by having actors sit on the pavement as if they were driving a car and moving them around (assuming the same identical position for each round of frames). Thus, the human-cars "drive" around, have a drag race, even back out of the garage, etc.

Film reference: "Neighbors," Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films, 330 West 42nd Street, New York, New York.

COLLAGE As in the first two, this technique employs single-frame shooting, but uses still photographs, famous paintings, or advertisements cut from magazines. A striking "environmental" effect is possible through this rather simple means. The number of frames expended on each photo or object will depend on the rhythm desired. While exploring, don't shoot fewer than three frames per unit.

Film reference: "Very Nice, Very Nice," Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films.

DRAW-ON Using clear leader and felt-tip pens, draw directly on the leader using lines, patterns, and designs. Using black leader, scratching will produce varied effects. Scratches can be filled in with color via the felt pen. Some students have obtained interesting results by creating the sound track by drawn-on markings. The sound achieved suggests electronic music. Lots of surprises here, and quick rewards since there is no time-lapse for processing. Take four feet of film, draw and paint on it, splice the ends together. Place the resulting loop in a conventional projector, and your "painting" will be non-stop. Create color environments.

Film reference: "Begone Dull Care" and others by Norman McLaren. Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films.

DOCUMENTARY Straight *cinema-verité* reporting, well-edited, of a neighborhood, special event, or even a whole city. Often, "television style." Need elaborate mobility, expertise with uncontrolled conditions, and generous quantities of luck.

Film reference: "A Time for Burning." NET/Indiana University Film Library, Bloomington, Indiana.

BIO-DOCUMENTARY Tell it like it is for a person, a group or gang.

Film reference: "Dead Birds." Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films.

Photo by Hella Hammid

STORY LINE Using live actors, tell a convincing story. This calls for rather elaborate work: scripting, story board, detailed planning of shot, acting, and effective teamwork.

Film reference: "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films.

IMPRESSIONISTIC Usually non-linear, sometimes moody and/or psychedelic, this genre employs fast cuts, match and jump cuts, repetitions of the same image or sequence for effect, and offers endless possibilities for exploration.

Film reference: "Dream of Wild Horses." Contemporary-McGraw Hill Films.

COMMERCIALS Try selling an idea or a product in thirty or sixty seconds. Make a commercial for yourself or for "Man" or "Black is Beautiful" or "Peace."

Film reference: "Award Winning Reel of TV Commercials." American TV and Radio Commercial Festival, 6 West 57th Street, New York, New York.

THE SCHOOL FILM A concept first identified by George Bouwman at Horace Mann School puts the whole school into the act. Music department creates sound track, art department does the settings, designs, and titles; the drama coach directs the acting of a story board developed in English class of information or situation researched by history class. Adults work in all phases equally with the kids. Hence, the "School Film."

Film reference: "Hurricane Island," available from Outward Bound Camps.

YOUNG FILM MAKERS EXCHANGE

THE PURPOSE OF THE EXCHANGE is to encourage student film making. By providing a rental service for well made student films, the Exchange permits aspiring film makers elsewhere to see what can be done with inexpensive equipment and massive ingenuity. This is but one way in which the films below can be used. Others: as curriculum material in English, Humanities and Social Studies; as a means of evaluating any work you yourself might be doing in film making; as an incentive to a beginning class in film making or film study, etc., etc. The Exchange also permits young film makers who have films listed to gauge their effect on a large audience.

TO SUBMIT FILMS FOR LISTING ON THE EXCHANGE. Send your films to the Exchange address listed below. The films must be accompanied by a fact sheet which includes the following:

(1) **Basic Data:** name and address of film maker, gauge of film, (16mm, 8mm, Super 8mm), type of sound track or tape track, b/w or color, running time.
(2) **Content:** What is the film about? (Use the descriptions of the films below as models.)
(3) **Audience:** For whom do you recommend the film?

The films will be screened at the Exchange by a group of students and teachers; if your film is selected, duplicate prints will be made and the film listed on the Exchange for rental. The original print will be returned to you.

It is important that films sent to the Exchange for screening travel Fourth Class, Special Delivery, Insured. Sent this way, they will be fully protected and will travel as fast as first class.

As the Exchange is a non-profit service, any rental money remaining after expenses incurred in duplicating and distributing a film have been paid, will revert to the film maker.

TO RENT FILMS FROM THE EXCHANGE. Any interested student or teacher may rent films from the Exchange. For a film up to 10 minutes there is a fee of $5. For a film over 10 minutes, there is a fee of $7. All rentals are pre-paid. Make checks payable to Young Film Makers' Exchange at the address below.

Young Film Makers' Exchange
Film/Media Center for Communications
Drexel Building
16th and Moore Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19125

GUM (16mm, b/w, optical sound, 6 minutes) By Paul Miller. Cheryl Brown, Carole Greene, Sandy Maddalena and Tim Ross of the Theatre Arts and Film making class, 9th grade, Quincy High School, Quincy, Mass.

GUM is a tragi-comic student view of the double standard at work in the classroom. The plot revolves around a gum-chewing student, a wicked teacher, a role-reversing fantasy and an ironic conclusion. The film is an excellent example of what can be achieved in a "first try." Of interest to junior and senior high as well as adults.

A DAY IN THE LIFE (16mm, b/w and color, tape-track, 5 min.) A first film made by six youngsters, ages 12 and 13.

More or less a montaged, literal illustration of the lyrics of the Beatles vocal, "A Day in the Life." Exhibits the experimental response of young people to auditory stimuli. The treatment is carefree and relaxed and only a bit self-conscious. A film of enthusiasm and visual magic of interest to Junior High.

ABSTRACTIONS (16mm, color, tape-track, 7 minutes) By John Skinner of the William Penn Charter School, Philadelphia.

Magnified view of liquids and solids in action. The shots do not reveal familiar material in a recognizable way. Juxtapositions of color and contrasting materials give the film an abstract and unusual quality. Shooting was done with an ordinary magnifying glass in conjunction with a 50mm lens. Of interest to all age groups.

NOTES ON A LONG TIME HAPPENING (Super 8mm, color, tape-track, 12 min.) By Steve Meachum, 12th grade, Drake High School, San Anselmo, California.

Especially appropriate for high school and adult audiences, this film shows a boy and girl who experience the beauty of their world. Their fate makes a strong statement about the "establishment."

CAN YOU HEAR IT NOW? (16mm, b/w, optical sound, 9 minutes) Directed by George Gray, 11th grade, Drake High School, San Anselmo, California.

An anti-war film based on the contrast between sound and image. As students study the sounds of war intrude.

THE GREAT BANK ROBBERY (8mm, b/w, tape-track, 15 minutes) Edited by Nancy Weiderhold, 12th Grade, George School, Fla.

A narrative film using live actors telling the story of robbing the George School Bank with a marvelous chase scene. Made by seniors at the school, each student editing his own version. Appropriate for all ages.

MACBETH (16mm, b/w, optical track, 4 min.) By Ken Nordine and David Malden, Notre Dame High School, Niles, Illinois.

MACBETH is a fine example of an "Impressionistic" film using live action, fast and jump cuts as well as surrealistic effects, which make a clear, dramatic and hard-hitting statement. It was developed as a project for English and is a contemporary rendering, called "variations on a theme," of Macbeth's famous lines on "Tomorrow."

DO YOU FEEL? (16mm, b/w, tape track, 4 min.) By Janet Stern, The Fieldston School, Riverdale, New York.

A collage of still photographs taken from magazines explores our reactions to a variety of contemporary events and situations—from the assassination of John F. Kennedy to football, advertising, and falling in love.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH (8mm, color, tape track, 3 min.) By Paul Ryan, Darien High School, Darien, Connecticut.

Another experimental film using collage and stills. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH won honorable mention at the Fordham Film Conference. The film shows excellent use of color and visual composition.

THE PERILS OF PAULINE, PAMELA AND PATRICIA (8mm, color, tape track, 16 min.) By Patrick O'Byrne, 11-years-old, Prussing Grammar School, Chicago.

PERILS is notable for its exhuberant humor. It is a fanciful, hilarious parody of the old melodrama in which Pauline (and others—all sisters of the film maker) get involved with some railroad tracks. Young Patrick intercut old footage of trains into his live-action narrative to tell the story.

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE and THE ACE (8mm, color, tape track, 8 min.) By Bruce Lessey, Wilmington Friends Schools, Wilmington, Delaware.

SORCERER is an excellent animated film which uses troll dolls to tell a charming story. THE ACE uses pixillation animation in which teenagers "drive" around the streets without the help of automobiles. Both are outstanding examples of the kinds of effects possible.

THE THIEF (16mm, b/w, optical sound, 10 min.)

THE THIEF is a live-action, narrative film which tells it like it is on the lower East Side of New York City. Since the film is part of an already existing catalogue of work we cannot include it as a regular "exchange" piece with the others. The catalogue is available on request from the Children's Cultural Foundation, 325 East 57th Street, New York, New York 10022.

THE MEMORY OF JOHN EARL MCFADDEN (16mm, b/w, optical track, 10 min.) By John Earl McFadden and others, Upward Bound, Wesleyan University.

MEMORY is a rare achievement for a first film; it tells the story of a southern Negro boy who is terrorized by a white store owner. The film's success stems from the fact that the story is a true life experience of the film maker, who not only wrote and directed the script, but also acts the role of himself.